



Petition for Exemption Summary:

In accordance with 14 CFR part 11, Section 11.63, ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. is seeking exemption from 14 CFR part 61.156(a):

"The applicant for the knowledge test must receive at least 30 hours of classroom instruction..."

Specifically, we are looking for exemption from the word "classroom" as it is currently being interpreted by FAA policy divisions AFS-200 and AFS-800, as constituting only a physical classroom where all participants are located in the same common location.

ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. maintains the position that the word "classroom", as used in 14 CFR part 61.156(a), is not limited to only that of a physical classroom, and should be defined as any classroom, virtual or physical.

Contact Information for this request:

This petition is being submitted on behalf of ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. by Shane Kelley.

Shane Kelley is the Director of Operations and Agent for Service for ATP Jet Simulation, Inc.

ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. operates as a 14 CFR part 142 Training Center under Air Agency # H7GX003K. ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. maintains a principal business office at 2800 Valley View Ln., Suite 180B, Irving, TX 75062.

Extent of relief and reason for exemption to 14 CFR part 61.156(a)

ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. provides Airline Transport Pilot Certification Training Program (ATP CTP) to the majority of U.S regional airlines and many privately sponsored pilots, including active duty military. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic all of these classes were conducted in person at our training center near the DFW Airport. With the onset of the pandemic we switched our existing class curriculum to a virtual classroom setting.

During this time, our sister company, ATP Flight School, was having great success delivering 14 CFR part 61 and part 141 ground school training in a live, interactive, virtual environment utilizing Google Classroom and Zoom platforms. We emulated the success of ATP Flight School and used these same platforms to quickly gain temporary FAA approval to deliver the academic ground training portion of the ATP CTP course by means of a live virtual classroom.



Our qualified ground instructors were trained in the delivery techniques needed to provide live, interactive training utilizing Zoom. We insisted that all of our students had their cameras turned on at all times with their microphone muted. The instructor was able to monitor the students attentiveness by watching them in gallery view and by asking questions of specific students. A co-instructor was added to all classes that exceed 12 students to ensure maximum participation. The primary duties of this extra instructor were to monitor the student video feed and to field questions in the chat feature. In addition to utilizing the chat for questions the students could always unmute themselves and ask the questions orally. The co-instructor often acted as the moderator of questions ensuring that the entire class benefited from the answers. Student feedback was very positive of this delivery method.

Interpretation of the word ‘classroom’ as it is used in 14 CFR part 61.156(a)

We have reviewed the language in The Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111–216) as well as the preamble in the final rule for 14 CFR 61 [Docket No.: FAA-2010-0100; Amdt. Nos. 61-130; 121-365; 135-127; 141-1; 142-9] and have found nothing that would indicate that the term “classroom”, as referenced in 61.156 (a), is only referring to a physical classroom. Nothing is stated in these documents indicating a prohibition against delivering approved training as outlined in Advisory Circular 61-138 utilizing virtual classrooms.

ATP CTP academic ground training using a virtual classroom should be able to be approved utilizing the existing guidance found in FAA Order 8900.1 Volume 3, Chapter 54, Section 6. Figure 3-4436 which articulates the guidelines for the FAA’s Training Center Program Manager to approve virtual classroom training as a form of distance learning.

The statement utilized in FAA Order 8900.1 describes the merits of distance learning, and further supports our petition. The FAA’s statement from 8900.1 is restated below:

3-4436 CREDITING DISTANCE LEARNING AS A COMPONENT OF GROUND TRAINING FOR FLIGHT CREWMEMBERS.

A. Background.

- 1) Advancements in electronic media have made the presentation of educational information second hand to many of our educators. It has become the norm as opposed to the novelty it was just a few years ago. The aviation industry has been one of the largest benefactors of the revolution in digital presentations and interactive media. Systems now include modern training products, many of which are being effectively used in aviation courses conducted by accredited universities and in air carrier training programs approved by the FAA. Collectively, those products fall under a relatively new heading that has been called “distance learning” or “distance education.” As the quality of those products continues to improve, the training/learning process stands to benefit even more.*



- 2) *Previous FAA guidance seemed to presume that traditional classroom training was inherently superior to other delivery methods. Besides the proven effectiveness of modern training products, distance learning affords a low-cost alternative to classroom ground training, an alternative that is timely and appropriate in today's challenging economic environment. The use of new technology and alternative training methods can, and often does, improve the quality of training. However, alternative training must meet or exceed the training standards that it is intended to replace.*

FAA Order 8900.1 Volume 3, Chapter 54, Section 6 currently provides a path for virtual classroom approval as a form of distance learning. ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. believes that properly managed and professionally produced virtual, live and interactive classrooms are superior to all other forms of distance learning methods. Virtual learning, at this professional level, should not be categorized and grouped as simply another distance learning curriculum but rather is deserving of its own category.

How is this request a benefit to the public as a whole

Every educational institution in the world had to adapt to overcome the restrictions implemented during this pandemic. Learning had to continue, even while social distancing measures were in place. Every successful institution, including those in aviation and transportation, quickly adapted ways to continue training students. Universities and local schools all moved their brick and mortar physical classroom to a virtual classroom learning environment. Institutions providing adult learning that adopted online protocols have been very successful. These protocols require that all learners be present with a live camera and audio feed to maintain interactivity. Instructors present the material in a live, real-time environment. The lessons learned during the pandemic will continue to be utilized far into the future.

A virtual classroom will allow students and airlines to coordinate travel for only the simulator training portion of the course, saving significant travel-related expenses. A virtual classroom will also provide increased flexibility in scheduling new hire pilot indoctrination classes. As the airline industry returns to normal, U.S. air carriers will be in a better position to address their pilot shortages with the added scheduling and training flexibility offered because the classroom portion of ATP CTP is being delivered virtually.



Reasons why the exemption will not negatively impact safety

When classroom training is delivered properly, utilizing a virtual platform, there has not been a reduction in the quality of training. ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. and other providers delivered this training for over a year utilizing Zoom and other virtual platforms with no detriment to the quality of training or safety. The pending pilot shortage, that all air carriers are experiencing, will be further exacerbated if all new hire pilots must add additional travel time to complete the classroom portion of the ATP CTP course. The virtual version of the ATP CTP classroom meets or exceeds an equivalent level of safety. The added logistical delay if a physical classroom is required could be considered a detriment to safety if the pilots training is delayed.

Summary

ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. is seeking relief of the requirement to conduct the ground portion of the ATP CTP course in a physical classroom setting. ATP Jet Simulation, Inc. maintains that the term "classroom" as used in 14 CFR part 61.156 (a) can be conducted in either a virtual or a physical classroom. A letter of interpretation of the use of the word "classroom" by the FAA General Counsel could be used to clarify this issue. However, our Certificate Management Office advised that AFS-200 was recommending that an application for exemption under 14 CFR part 11, Section 11.63 would be their preferred method for a request for relief.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shane Kelley".

Shane Kelley
Director of Operations, Agent for Service
ATP Jet Simulation, Inc.
Air Agency # H7GX003K